(b) Export of tea from India during the last three years have been as under:—

Year	Qty. (Mn.Kgs)	Value (Rs.Crores)
1995-96	167.47	1244.52
1996-97	169.04	1301.46
1997-98	211.76	1953.91

(c) Orders for export are received directly by the Traders/Exporters. The Govt. is not in a position to indicate the amount of orders for tea export received by them. However it is estimated that around 220 Mn. Kgs of tea is likely to be exported during the year 1999-2000.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir, The gardens in Assam, North Bengal as well as South India have experienced an unprecedented long dry spell during the first three months of 1999. While this has resulted in substantial crop reduction in South India during the first two months of (Jan-Feb), 1999, the same has adversely affected the crop production in north India during March' 99. Insofar as the impact of the drought conditions on tea exports is concerned, it is too early to indicate the same. The Board has sent an advisory Circular to all the Tea Producer Associations indicating the measures to be taken by them for minimising the impact of drought. The Producer Associations have been requested to bring this to the notice of all the member garden.

Duty Free Import of Tea

2960. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed duty free import of tea from SAARC countries;

(b) if so, whether Government have critically examined its impact on the domestic tea industry and overall market prices;

(c) whether the Assam Chief Minister has represented in this regard;

(d) if so, what are the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(e) the manner in which Government propose to give relief to the domestic tea industry?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) Under the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanks FTA signed in December 1998, the two sides are to exchange the lists of items on which duty preferences shall be given and items on which no duty preferences shall be given for the present. The lists are under finalisation and consultations are being held with Sir Lanka in this regard. While preparing the lists from our side, consultations have been held with the concerned Ministries and which the Industry & trade. Due importance has been given to the representations received from various quarters including the State Governments.

The Chief Minister of Assam has written to the Prime Minister requesting that import of Tea should not be allowed duty free under the Free Trade Agreement.

Duty concessions being provided on various items under the Agreement will be available only on the Basic Customs Duty and not on Special Additional Customs Duty and the Additional Customs Duty in lieu of Central excise.

Misuse of DEPB Scheme

2961. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Duty Entitlement Passbook Schemes are greatly being misused by the exporters and the Ministry of Finance wants to plug loopholes and check growth misuse of the schemes;